231 the calves born each year are normally
439 kept until they are two years old, when they are sold either to dealers on the island or to visiting dealers from the mainland. No cattle are slaughtered for meat on the island at present as it pays better to send them on to the fairs at Clifden. The dealers wait for a favorable opportunity of selling the stock and the farmers agreed that these arrangements were far better than individual visits to the fair by the difficult route described on p. 203. The policy
654 of grading up stock, favored by the
232 Congested Districts Board,[13] has been highly successful; there are accredited bulls of the Hereford and Aberdeen Angus breeds available on the island.
234 No butter is sold and little is ever
437 bought. As one of the islanders put it, "You wouldn't understand our ways, sir. If we have a bit of butter over, there's sure to be someone who can do with it, so we just let them have it."
● 236 Sheep are kept in large numbers and pastured on the common lands; there are probably at least 1000 sheep owned by the farmers on this island. The sheep are sold to the butcher for the island's only meat supply, or to dealers for eventual sale on the mainland, and the wool clip is sold to a Dublin firm which sends a representative to the island in September. No pigs are kept,
231 nor any goats, and each farmer has only
[235] a few fowls since there is no way of selling eggs or chickens; only a small number of people have geese, ducks, or turkeys. During the 1914–1918 war, eggs were sold at 3d. each for export, but transport difficulties and the failure to develop any marketing scheme have long since extinguished the trade. The lack of pigs, which may seem surprising,

[113] [13] W. L. Micks: An account of the constitution, administration and dissolution of the Congested Districts Board for Ireland from 1891 to 1923, Dublin, 1925, pp. 27–33.

[p. 206(B)]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

feet in diameter. (Small, carefully made clews of hay rope, with a centre of rags or corks, are occasionally used as footballs; similar coils of rope in England seem to be oval in shape and would serve rather as balls for Rugby football.) Laying by a stock of clews was a useful occupation for a wet day. The man of the house chose the sedentary end of the rope, sitting under cover in the barn among the thrashed straw and feeding it evenly into the rope as the other end was twisted by a retreating youth armed with a thraw-hook. As the rope grew, the boy had to withdraw into the rain away from the shelter and the sociability of the barn, and this simple scene is the theme of one of Douglas Hyde's Irish plays, *Casadh an tSugáin* (The Twisting of the Rope). A rival suitor makes love to a girl in the barn while the unfortunate twister is forced by his unco-operative employer to watch the proceedings from the end of a lengthening and apparently endless rope.

Hay ropes are both softer and stronger than straw and were used, for example, for parts of the harness where straw ropes would have chafed and broken. They were naturally employed for securing large cocks of hay (tramp cocks, Fig. 52) against the wind; and tethers for young animals were often made of hay rope. A Donegal landlord writing of the early nineteenth century tells of cabbages tethered against the wind with three hay ropes.[1] The shearing rope, four or five feet long, by which the legs of sheep were tied together when clipping the wool, was also made of hay or marram grass. Here we may take note of the curious practice of piecemeal shearing, recorded from Mayo[2] and Donegal[3] and possibly to be attributed to ancient usage rather than to indolence. It seems that the women were in the habit of clipping bits off the sheep at any season, as they needed the wool. Stronger than ropes of straw or hay are those made of rushes or sedges, and stronger still those of fir, heather, birch twigs, willow bark, horsehair or rawhide. Bog fir ropes were still being twisted in north Antrim, a few years ago, for securing thatch and making bed-frames. Ropes were made even from seaweed, as we shall see in the following chapter. Many

[1] J. Hamilton, *Sixty Years Experience*, 19.
[2] C. R. Browne, *Garumna and Lettermullen*.
[3] Lord George Hill, *Gweedore*, 24.

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

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[462] fishing season, will not use up so much time getting to and from the pastures. Other reasons for shifting cows are that the village wells are more dependable than the springs at the back of the island during occassional summer dry spells, and cows when "tormented" by insects can run about the terrace fields more safely than they can the rockier and more fissured indigenous and improved plots above.

[512] Milking is done between eight thirty and ten o'clock in the morning and four thirty and six in the afternoon during the winter, and an hour or two later in the summer. When milking, the farmer crouches at the right side of the beast and holds a pail with his left hand while drawing one teat at a time with his right. He murmurs to the cow in Irish to keep it pacified, and is ready to move swiftly should the animal suddenly shift its position.

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[233] To encourage cattle breeding, the government subsidizes the construction of reservoirs at the back of the island for collecting rain water, and of barns and outbuildings for storing hay, rye, potatoes, and farming and fishing equipment. The typical reservoir is placed in an area surrounded by actual or potential grazing land located at a considerable distance from the nearest spring. It is composed of a cemented stone platform with a slanting concave surface which drains into a

[343] rectangular shaped tank. Barns and outbuildings are small stone structures, usually thatched, which are single roomed and doored and may have one or two small windows. The barns, like the reservoirs, are placed within easy access of fields used for pasturage.

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236 Sheep are reared in Inis Beag to furnish wool, as well as to be sold and slaughtered for local consumption. They demand little care, as they are allowed to graze in undeveloped pastures and to obtain water from rain filled depressions in the pavement and from plants that they devour. Kept by their owners for five or six years and then disposed of, they are sheared once a year between May and July. There are white, brown, and black haired varieties, and between six and eight

[437] pounds of wool can be procured from an animal every shearing. If a householder possesses a large herd, he may choose to sell some of his lambs when they are six months old, and in August many lambs are shipped from Inis Beag on the steamer.

[262] Although some folk from time to time slaughter their own sheep to provide meat
[437] for the tables, several householders maintain large herds and specialize in selling lamb and mutton to visitors and fellow islanders.

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[232]
[224] All Inis Beag homes have at least one dog and most of them have a cat. These animals perform certain services and act as pets. At the time walls were low at the back of the island, dogs were employed to round up sheep, and they also aided their owners hunt rabbits along the rock piled shore of the west sound, when the meat of this animal was eaten more commonly than it is today. Now, their duties are restricted to warning of the approach of strangers and chasing chickens out of the kitchen. Cats are kept to catch mice, and their presence on the premises is sufficient to keep rats from approaching the house and outbuildings. They are treated less well than dogs, but both dogs and cats are given little affection and often are not fed enough. It is true that some islanders are strongly attached to their pets and provide them with adequate care, but they are the exceptions. A man devoted to his dog will be followed about the island by the animal, and a desired trait in a dog is that it will not show interest in persons outside of the